

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

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UNCLAS STRASBOURG 117

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TAGS: PINT, FR.

SUBJECT: GEORGES MARCHAIS BEGINS A WEEK IN ALSACE

1. SUMMARY. GEORGES MARCHAIS, NATIONAL SECRETARY OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY, STARTED A WEEK-LONG VISIT TO ALSACE JUNE 12 BY ADDRESSING A GROUP OF SUPPORTERS AND LOCAL PARTY NOTABLES. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE VISIT, HE GAVE A WIDE-RANGING INTERVIEW TO ALSACE S MAJOR NEWSPAPER, EXPRESSING HIS VIEWS ON THE DEBATE OVER EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COST OF THE COMMON PROGRAM, RELATIONS WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY, AND THE PARTY S POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIET UNION. END SUMMARY.

2. MARCHAIS STARTED HIS WEEK LONG TRIP TO ALSACE BY ADDRESSING AN ENTHUSIASTIC GROUP OF LOCAL SUPPORTERS AND PARTY LEADERS IN WITTELSHEIM, NEAR MULHOUSE JUNE 12. THE REASON FOR HIS EXTENDED VISIT, HE EXPLAINED TO THE CROWD, WAS TO DISCOVER FOR HIMSELF THE REALITIES OF THE LOCAL SITUATION WHICH SEEM INCREASINGLY BRIGHT FOR COMMUNIST PROSPECTS AS WITNESSED BY THE RECENT ELECTION OF THE FIRST COMMUNIST TOWN MAYOR IN THE HAUT-RHIN
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DEPARTMENT SINCE THE LIBERATION. THE COMMUNIST POLITICIAN SAID THAT ALSACE IS MOVING DEEP DOWN IN A REACTION AGAINST THE UNFULFILLED PROMISES OF PRESIDENT GISCARD D ESTAING WHO, ACCORDING TO MARCHAIS, HAD PLEDGED THAT, COME WHAT MAY ON THE ECONOMIC SCENE, ALSACE WOULD REMAIN AN ISLAND OF PROSPERITY. WHERE IS THIS ISLAND, MARCHAIS ASKED, IF 80 PERCENT OF ALSATIANS EARN LESS THAN 2,500 FRANCS PER MONTH?

3. MARCHAIS DISCUSSED THE PARTY POSITION ON DIRECT ELECTION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, AND THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOCIALISTS AND LEFT RADICAL ON REVISING THE COMMON PROGRAM. MARCHAIS ALSO TOUCHED ON THESE QUESTIONS DURING AN INTERVIEW WITH JOURNALISTS FROM LES DERNIERES NOUVELLES D ALSACE, STRASBOURG S MAJOR NEWS-PAPER. IN EXPLAINING THE PARTY S POSITION IN FAVOR OF DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, MARCHAIS REMARKED THAT EVEN THOUGH THE COMMUNISTS HAD FOUGHT AGAINST THE FORMATION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY IN 1958, IT DOES NOW EXIST AND ONE MUST WORK WITHIN ITS FRAMEWORK, ON CONDITION, OF COURSE, THAT ANY FRENCH LEGISLATION CONCERNING THE PARLIAMENT GUARANTEE FRANCE HER TOTAL INDEPENDENCE. THE PARTY HAS JUST EXAMINED THE GOVERNMENT S DRAFT LAW AND HAS FOUND THAT THE CONDITIONS FOR GUARANTEEING INDEPENDENCE ARE CONSIDERABLE , BUT THIS ISN T SUFFICIENT. MARCHAIS BELIEVES THAT THE PROPOSAL MUST BE LOOKED AT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF THE ELECTORAL LAW ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AND CERTAIN ADDITIONAL GUARANTEES INTRODUCED.

4. THE ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOCIALISTS ON THE COMMON PROGRAM HAVE SHOWN THE SOCIALIST PROPOSALS TO BE THIN IN LIGHT OF THE PRESENT ECONOMIC SITUATION. THE DISCUSSIONS ARE GOING TO BE ROUGH, MARCHAIS ADMITTED, BUT THIS IS NORMAL. THE ONLY NEW NATIONALIZATION BEING DEMANDED BY THE COMMUNISTS IS THAT OF PEUGEOT-CITROEN. ASKED WHETHER THE PUBLICATION OF A COST ESTIMATE OF THE COMMON PROGRAM JUST BEFORE FRANCOIS MITTERAND S DEBATE WITH PRIME MINISTER BARRE HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO BE A LOW BLOW AGAINST THE SOCIALIST LEADER, MARCHAIS DENIED UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT IT HAD BEEN MEANT AS A BANANA PEEL UNDER MITTERAND S FEET AND ADDED THAT IF HE HAD DEBATED THE PRIME MINISTER INSTEAD, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY IF A POLITICAL ALLY HAD GIVEN HIM SUCH A DOCUMENT.

5. MARCHAIS STRONGLY DENIED THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO ENTER A LEFTIST GOVERNMENT. ONLY A LEFTIST GOVERNMENT, WITH COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION, IS CAPABLE OF LEADING FRANCE OUT OF HER PRESENT CRISIS, HE EXPLAINED. IF THE COMMUNISTS WERE NOT WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A GOVERNMENT, IT WOULD HAVE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PARTY SINCE IT WOULD IMPLY THAT IT WAS ACCOMODATING ITSELF TO THE PRESENT STATE OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND MISERY IN FRANCE. THE COMMUNIST LEADER ADMITTED THAT MAINTAINING UNITY WITHIN THE LEFT WAS A BATTLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE MAJORITY DOES NOT HIDE ITS DESIRE TO SMASH THE LEFTIST COALITION. MARCHAIS HOPES THAT THE UPCOMING ELECTORAL BATTLE WILL BE CONDUCTED IN PEACE AND CALM , ALTHOUGH HE WARNED THAT THE MAJORITY HAS AN INTEREST IN SEEING A STRAINED AND VIOLENT CAMPAIGN.

6. ON THE PARTY S RELATIONSHIP WITH MOSCOW, MARCHAIS DECLARED THAT HIS PARTY MAKES ITS DECISIONS IN TOTAL INDEPENDENCE. THERE ARE , HE ASSERTED, CERTAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PCF AND THE CPSU, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO THE IDEA OF A SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY. MOREOVER, THE FRENCH PARTY DOES NOT AGREE WITH REPRESSIVE MEASURES TAKEN AGAINST DISSENTERS. HE THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY THAT HE WOULD MEET WITH SOVIET PARTY CHAIRMAN BREZHNEV DURING THE LATTER S UPCOMING STATE VISIT TO FRANCE IF THE PRACTICE OF PAST VISITS BY SOVIET LEADERS IS FOLLOWED.

7. DOES GEROGES MARCHAIS CONSIDER HIMSELF A SUPER STAR BECAUSE OF THE HEAVY PUBLICITY HE RECEIVES? RECALLING THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAS HAD SOME EXPERIENCE WITH PERSONALITY CULTS, MARCHAIS SAID THAT THIS IS A SICKNESS THAT HE IS TRYING TO AVOID, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITTED THAT THE MASS MEDIA AND THE DEMANDS OF TELEVISION HAVE CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE DEVELOPMENT

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OF A STAR SYSTEM IN POLITICS WHICH TURNS WHAT MUST BE A DEBATE FOR IDEAS INTO A SPECTACLE. AS FOR HIMSELF, MARCHAIS, HE REMINDS HIS ENTOURAGE THAT HE IS NOT IRREPLACEABLE AND WILL SOMEDAY PASS FROM THE SCENE.

8. COMMENT: MARCHAIS HAS MADE NO NEW OR STARTLING STATEMENT DURING HIS VISIT TO ALSACE, BUT HIS VISIT HAS ATTRACTED WIDE-SPREAD INTEREST AND HAS DRAWN CONSIDERABLE CROWDS AND PRESS ATTENTION. END COMMENT. ROMINE

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